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September, 1948

FLASH—N.Y. MEETING

The New York C. E. A. will meet at the University of Rochester, October 16, Main meeting 3:00 p.m. Speakers: Alexander Drummond, Cornell, Sanford Meech, Syracuse.

Eastern Penna. C. E. A.

On Saturday, October 30, 1948, the Eastern Pennsylvania Section of C. E. A. will hold its organizing meeting at Pennsylvania Military College, Chester, Pennsylvania. In charge is Professor Dean B. Arnold. (His co-adjustor in organizing the group, Professor Harry R. Warfel, has gone to the University of Florida.) Tentative program:

10:30 a.m. Registration and Greeting

11:30 a.m. "The English Program and General Education." Francis Mason, Gettysburg College.

12:30 p.m. Lunch in College dining room.

1:30 p.m. "The Reading Problem at the College Level," Emmett A. Betts, Temple University.

It is expected that those who come to the meeting will wish to discuss fully and critically what the speakers have to say.

New England C. E. A.

The New England Section is planning a meeting in Boston in mid-November. Program Chairman: Marwell H. Goldberg, University of Massachusetts.

Annual Meeting

At the Annual Meeting in December, it is planned to continue the discussion of suitable training for college teachers of English, and the materials and purposes most desirable for the present undergraduate body. It is requested that members propose particular topics for discussion. They should address the Executive Secretary.

TWO BIT BOOKS

During the past two years, one of our bookstores, the Oberlin Coop, has been building up a fine supply of worthwhile POCKET, BANTAM, PENGUIN, and PELICAN books. From this collection the ordinary 'best sellers'—westerns, detective stories, and the like, are excluded, but every standard reprint of a good book is there. The manager, Harry Chang, goes over the order lists with me, and we order two each of all likely titles—more of those which sell. Since these books are usually sent out on consignment, we have had some trouble getting the publishers to cooperate, but we kept at it, and by now they are sending us only what we order. We are now beginning to get the British PENGUIN, PUFFIN, and PELICAN series direct from England. We put on a display of our first order, but most of the books in it were marked 'sold'. Many people, students, faculty, and townspeople, watch the shelves and buy quite a few titles at one time.

To get my own students used to these books, I put a number of them on a shelf in my classroom, using as a starter a small legacy from Mrs. Ella Green, a woman who had begun college work at about sixty-five, and had been in my class. She died before finishing her fourth term. When this money ran out, I collected a quarter from each of my students, and bought a large supply of the books at a slight discount. These the students are free to borrow, read, and return (if they think of it) to the shelf. The books are so cheap that we don't bother to sign them out. Anyone who wants to read them just picks them up. Anyone who wants his quarter back just keeps one of the books. At the end of this term, since I am leaving the college, we are giving those that are left to UNESCO.

These books are read. Between classes, while waiting for me to come in, the students pick them up and look through them, then carry them off. Other classes meeting in the same room make pretty free use of them, too. I recommend the practise heartily to anyone interested in helping young people to cultivate the habit of reading good books.

Donald J. Lloyd

An Error in 'Shakespeare Improved' Corrected

Teachers of the drama know that after twenty years Hazleton Spencer's *Shakespeare Improved* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927) remains the authoritative book in its field and continues to interest students. Indeed, if it were not for the distinction of Spencer's scholarship and the wide use of his book, there would be no excuse after twenty years to correct an error, a curious omission, distorting his analysis of John Dryden's *Troilus and Cressida*.

This omission is important because it is the crux of Dryden's play, the turning point in the action and the key to Cressida's character. On page 228 Spencer quotes the long stage direction beginning "The Trumpets sound . . ." from Act IV, Scene ii, and then states:

This scene continues to the end as in Shakespeare though reduced and altered in diction.

The original V, i, follows without a break. This scene is not greatly reduced. As in Shakespeare (V, ii), next comes the interview between Diomedes and Cressida, overheard by Troilus. The pledge becomes a ring, instead of a scarf; the coquetry of Cressida is not so brazen, and the length of her interview is shortened. . . . Spencer thus omits from his analysis of Act IV, scene ii, a conversation between Cressida and Calchas, her father. In reading the dialogue in the following quotation from the first quarto of 1679, four important points appear in this conversation:

1. Calchas wishes to return to Troy with Cressida.
2. But to do so, Cressida must dissemble love to Diomedes.
3. Calchas urges her to give Troilus' ring to Diomedes.
4. Cressida remains innocent though assenting to her father's commands.

Enter Calchas, Cressida.
Calch. O, what a blessing is a virtuous child!
Thou hast reclam'd my mind, and calm'd my passions
(Continued on Page 2)

"Civilization 1-2" At Alfred University

Some readers of the Critic may be interested in a new course at Alfred University, in which the traditional courses in "Freshman English" and "History of Western Civilization" have been combined. Our course is a modest experiment, necessarily imperfect, not necessarily a model that any other college will care to copy exactly—or perhaps at all. Still, the existence of the C. E. A. implies that we are interested in each other's work; so I toss the following statement into the critical hopper.

The course, now being given for the second time, is required for freshmen and carries a credit of five hours each semester. The class of approximately 125 meets as a group for lectures on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and in sections of about 20 students each on Thursday and Friday. The Thursday hour is devoted exclusively to English composition, the Friday hour to a short quiz and to discussion.

The subject matter may be described as "the cultural history of Western Europe." The course differs from the conventional history "survey" in two respects. First, the emphasis is laid, not on political and military events, nor mainly on the development of particular institutions, but on the basic principles of social organization that can be seen to operate in any period, and on the way in which human beings have lived and thought—that is, what values they have accepted—in periods where a relative unity of culture has been briefly achieved.

Second, instead of trying to say something about every period and every culture, the lecturers try to present the most important aspects of a relatively few "key" periods. After a week of introductory lectures, four weeks are spent on the "Golden Age"—the fifth century B. C.—in Greece. Two weeks are then devoted to the Hebrew culture and early Christianity. Then a leap is made straight across the Roman, Byzantine, and Mohammedan cultures to the thirteenth century in Western Europe, when the Middle Ages are generally thought to have reached their peak of (Continued on Page 4)

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ROBERT T. FITZHUGH

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Application for entry as Second Class matter at Mineola, N. Y., is pending.

SCRATCH TWO 'R'S'

Why read when you can listen, or look at pictures? It's a fair question. Suppose printing hadn't been invented first, but cameras and telephones and radios and phonographs. Why write a letter when you can call up, and have the conversation recorded if it has to be filed? Why read a novel when the movie is a much more vivid form of narrative? How many books, and certainly textbooks, wouldn't be improved for more pictures and less writing? Movies and other projection techniques are superb vehicles for exposition and description. It isn't altogether fantastic that we could learn to read sound tracks and do away with alphabets altogether. That would certainly simplify things.

Writing is a cumbersome process, anyway, and printing is tedious and awkward. Why not get rid of as much of both as we can? We'd all rather get the news, do business, make dates, and shop by word of mouth, and keeping records by photography and transcriptions

cuts the chances for mistakes. Even poetry is a lot better heard than seen. Printing and writing are cheaper, and we're used to them, but that's no reason to think they're here forever, particularly now when we've got television and the atomic bomb. Come to think of it, reading and writing are pretty old fashioned.

A Humble Remonstrance

There can be no doubt that *The Critic* has proved its worth as a vehicle of opinion for members of the English faculties of our colleges, and like many others I am sure that I have been instructed and stimulated by a reading of its pages. But I wonder whether the scope of its discussion of English could not be broadened to include more material on the teaching of literature. Throughout the profession one sees a tendency to be obsessed by the problems of teaching composition, and while no one can deny that these problems are always pressing—and as yet unsolved—we ought, I think, to pay more attention to the even more difficult techniques and procedures of teaching poetry, drama, and the novel. The questions of emphasis and technique in teaching written and oral expression are well understood and have been thoroughly investigated; every professional magazine is loaded with articles or analyses of student recycles on new theme grading desponse to composition projects of one kind or another. But many of the pressing issues of teaching literature remain neglected or undiscussed in the pages of such publications as *The Critic*.

This "remonstrance," then, is a plea for a moratorium on suggestions about composition and for a fuller discussion of how to teach literature. I should like the opinions of other teachers, for example, on the success, if any, achieved with *Understanding Poetry*. Is it the best alternative to the pant and palpitation method so long in vogue? Is analysis of the Brooks and Warren sort the way, the truth, and the light, or a very clever sort of pedantry? Do they tend to substitute ingenuity for insight? Is their method more effective for those who burn to write poetry than for those who do not? Does it tend to become a mere sniffing-out of ironies, a pursuit of the paradox up hill and down dale? I do not for the moment imagine that there is a definitive answer to any one of

these questions any more than to the numerous problems in the field of composition teaching, but what puzzles me is the relative neglect of the problems of teaching literature.

Certainly no one can pretend that these problems are not difficult and also immediate. How, for instance, does one persuade future veterinarians and accountants of the desirability of some experience with literature? What are we to say to a student who paraphrases Henry Ford with the statement that literature is "bunk"? Shall we try to teach objectively, without intrusion of our own points of view, or shall we attempt to bend the student mind toward our own enthusiasms? How shall we fight the pernicious habit of finding a "moral" in every piece of serious literature? How valid is the purely historical approach for undergraduates? What balance can we find between esthetic judgment and historical fact? These are some of the topics I should like to see discussed in the pages of *The Critic*. It was interesting to see such an article as "Testing Poetic Appreciation" in the May issue of *College English*, and there is no reason why *The Critic* could not have similar articles.

Paul E. Reynolds
R. I. State College

AN ERROR

(Continued from Page 1)

Of anger and revenge:
my love to Troy
Revives within me, and
my lost Tyara
No more disturbs my
mind:

Cress. A virtuous con-
quest.

Calch. I have a woman's
longing to return
But yet which way,
without your ayd I
know not.

Cress. Time must instruct
us how.

Calch. You must dissem-
ble love to Diomedes
still:

False Diomedes, bred in
Ulysses School
Can never be deceiv'd
But by strong Arts and
blandishments of love.
Put 'em in practice all;
seem lost and won,
And draw him on, and
give him line again.

This Argus then may
close his hundred eyes
And leave our flight
more easy.

Cress. How can I answer
this to love and Troilus?

Calch. Why, 'tis for him
you do it: promise
largely;

That Ring he saw you
wear, he much suspects
Was given you by a
lover; let him wear it.

Omission of this passage ap-
parently leads Spencer later in
his analysis of Act V to be sur-
prised at Cressida's innocence,
for he says on page 230:

A convenient noise is
heard outside, and while
Troilus investigates, Cressida
and Calchas come in.
Her first words show us
that, to use the well-worn
phrase, "It is all a mistake."
"Where is he?" she cries;
"I'll be justify'd or dye."

The reader of Dryden's play,
however, has known from the
omitted scene in Act IV, scene
ii, that "it is all a mistake." That
knowledge, in fact, creates the
ironic quality in Troilus' mis-
understanding of Cressida's dis-
sembling love and her giving
the ring to Diomedes. Thus
Dryden's treatment of
Troilus' observation of Cressida
and Diomedes differs from
Shakespeare's. Dryden's Cressida
is pretending love; Shake-
speare's Cressida is false.

The omission, furthermore,
may explain Spencer's observ-
ing on page 231:

This is an excellent situ-
ation and Dryden handles
it well, tossing the ques-
tion of Cressida's infidelity
back and forth, yet making
it clear Diomedes lies and
that the lady is only to be
censured for not having
avoided the appearance of
evil. Still Troilus will not
believe, and to convince
him she kills herself, "a
stale expedient," as Sir Wal-
ter Scott remarks.

On the contrary, if Dryden
handles the scene well it is for
quite another reason: namely,
the dramatic irony in Troilus'
terrible misunderstanding. He
sacrifice for her father, only
explained in the omitted scene
still presents her to Troilus as
unfaithful. Her innocence, con-
sequently, is indisputable, no
an artificial development. Hence
the catastrophe turns upon the
discovery of her innocence, a
Sir Walter Scott pointed out
long ago:

The arrangement of the
plot is, indeed, more arti-
ficially modelled; but the
preceding age, during which
the infidelity of Cressida
was proverbially current,
could as little have endured
a catastrophe turning upon
(Continued on Page 3)

I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of **I'VE BEEN READING**. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

Adventures of a Ballad Hunter. By John A. Lomax (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947. Pp. xi + 302. \$4.50)

Many are familiar with **Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads and Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp** by John A. Lomax and with **American Ballads and Fo'k Songs, Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly**, and **Our Singing Country** by him and his son Alan, whom he took out of the University of Texas at the end of his junior year to help him collect the songs of our land. John and Alan Lomax have contributed more than ten thousand songs on records to the Archives of American Folk Song of the Library of Congress. These were taken down in the field. **Adventures of a Ballad Hunter** tells in a delightfully interesting manner of the life and experiences of one absorbed in preserving the songs of the folk.

Our ballad hunter was born in the Black River country of Mississippi in 1867. When he was two years old, his family

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in their covered wagons moved west to Texas, where he spent a great part of his life. It was in the Lone Star State that he learned to love the singing of the folk. From Nat Blythe, a Negro of eighteen whom he came to know at nine years of age, he had acquired a sense of rhythm. He learned the songs of the Negro and the cowboy and soon began to write them down. In the years that followed, as he struggled for an education, he kept in mind the songs he had heard in Texas. They were a part of him. His collecting, however, was never encouraged until he reached Harvard in 1906 to study for a master's degree. There he met Professors Barret Wendell and G. L. Kittredge, who recognized the importance of his endeavors and arranged for him three successive fellowships at five hundred dollars each for the "investigation of American ballads." The collecting resulted in **Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads** (1910), which was not well received by academic audiences in Texas. Even a book reviewer for the **Boston Transcript** called the book vulgar and cheap trash. In 1911, however, Professor Kittredge put him on the program of the Modern Language Association of America, where he showed how the rough songs of the southwestern frontier express the life and experiences of the cowboy at work on the range and in trail-driving. During the next ten or fifteen years he spoke at more than two hundred institutions of learning, in every state except three. The interest in native folk songs had been awakened.

John Lomax never lost his enthusiasm for folk songs, even though he found it necessary to give most of his time for the next twenty years to making a living and bringing up a family. Whether he was Registrar and Secretary of the University of Texas or a worker in the investment banking house of Lee Higginson and Company in Chicago or Secretary of the University of Texas Ex-Students' Association or a staff member of the Republic Bank of Dallas, he kept alive his love of the folk song.

In 1932, after the financial collapse, when his health was not good and his fortune had reached its lowest ebb since the day he left college, he again started out on a long lecture and folksong collecting trip. It was at this time that Alan joined his father. In a Ford with a recording machine and all necessary apparatus, they traveled through Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Ken-

tucky, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, North and South Carolina, and Virginia. This trip resulted in **American Ballads and Folk Songs**.

The Lomaxes found that penitentiaries contained a great many singers. It was in a Louisiana penitentiary that they found Lead Belly, whom they later got out of prison. Another singer that they got out of prison was Iron Head, who knew the work songs of the black men. From him they heard such songs as "Little John Henry", "The Gray Goose", and "Pick a Bale of Cotton". He traveled with Mr. Lomax, for his singing inspired other Negro singers to attempt to excel him. In this way many songs were found which might not otherwise have been discovered.

The Lomaxes attended burials, baptisms and sermons. They went wherever there was singing. They collected chanteys, ballads, work songs, and calls. They met all types of people. The trials, tribulations, joys, pleasures, and successes of collectors are all recorded in **Adventures of a Ballad Hunter**. It is an excellent account that can be enjoyed by anyone. It is both entertaining and informative.

Margaret M. Bryant
Brooklyn College

In **The Frozen Sea** (Oxford, \$3.50) Mr. George Neider has written a book on Franz Kafka that is intelligible, provocative, and interesting. Too much modern criticism tends to befuddle rather than explain. But, at least, on the lowest level, one knows what Mr. Neider is talking about. And that is all to the good.

Further, he demolishes Edmund Wilson's idea that Kafka is peculiarly racial, and so, not too important for most of the world. As Mr. Neider says, "We are all Jews today, wanderers and heathens in a world exploding under the impact of those myths of necessity and the absolute." Mr. Neider shows Kafka as one of the authentic voices of our time, one who has depicted powerfully man's alienation from his own society. Who today, more than Kafka, has probed into man's guilt, into man's loss of innocence, into man's maladjustment in a formalized society where most of the forms are hostile to humans?

Perhaps Mr. Neider rides a little too hard his Freudian hobby horse. Yet his chapters on the secret meanings — the key to Kafka — are singularly persuasive if strangely unconvincing.

Henry Leffert
The City College of New York

AN ERROR

(Continued from Page 2)

the discovery of her innocence, as one which should have exhibited Helen chaste, of Hector a coward. (**The Works of John Dryden**, edited by Sir Walter Scott, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, Edinburgh, 1883, Vol VI, p. 361.)

Wilbur D. Dunkel
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There was a young lady from
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Who lost her heart at a damp-
shire;
It wasn't real love
Sent from above
But a case of something in
pampshire.

There was also a lady from
Buckinghamshire
Who loved to shoot partridge and duckinghamshire
It wasn't the meat
On which she was sweet
But the rushes and swamps and
muckinghamshire.

There was a young man from
Salisbury
Who would dominate ladies and
scalisbury;
He had such success
With his winning caress
That he built up a regular
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Can anyone produce these if
he abandons his mind to it?—
Editor.

"CIVILIZATION 1-2"

(Continued from Page 1)

achievement. After a month on this period, another month on the Renaissance closes the semester. In the second semester, the main divisions are the Reformation, the "Enlightenment," the "Age of Revolution," and "Twentieth Century Trends."

The lectures are given by a "permanent panel" drawn from the Departments of English, Political Science, Sociology, and Economics, aided by "guest lecturers" on religion, philosophy, science and art. The lectures are of course intended to complement, and not merely repeat, the material in the texts. The books currently being used are Burns' *Western Civilization* and Thompson and Gassner's *Our Heritage of World Literature*. The second of these is used in order to give students a chance to do some reading in "primary sources."

Ideally, the composition should also be taught by the members of the permanent panel. But the modesty (not to suggest any other motive) of the representatives of the social sciences proved invincible, and therefore the composition work is handled by the English Depart-

ment. In this part of the course the same standards of quantity and quality have been maintained as in the traditional course in Freshman English. Students write a weekly 500-word exposition (or its equivalent) on one of several suggested topics connected with the historical subject matter. Usually an attempt is made to get students to relate this subject matter to contemporary conditions, and to express personal opinions supported by specific facts.

Two hour tests are given during each semester, each consisting of one discussion question which calls for the synthesis of a number of particular facts under a significant general heading (such as the ideal of the "Golden Mean" in ancient Greece) and these papers are graded on correctness and clarity of expression as well as on fullness of information and effectiveness of organization. Half of the final examination consists of a similar exercise. The student's knowledge of subject matter is further tested (and, it is hoped, strengthened and articulated) by weekly objective tests, consisting partly of multiple choice and partly of fill-in questions. Half of the final examination is of this objective type. No item is used that is not considered to have intrinsic importance, and every effort is made to avoid encouraging the indiscriminate memorizing of mere facts. The final semester grade is determined by counting the weekly quizzes as one-third, the weekly themes as one-third, and the final examination as one-third.

In order to make the course as nearly unified as possible, every member of the permanent panel and of the English staff attends all the lectures, has charge of one of the discussion sections, and at weekly staff meetings joins in planning the program of lectures, discussing the previous week's test, and making out the test for the current week.

Two theoretical objections to this course are obvious: that the treatment of history is bound to be superficial and disconnected, and that adequate instructions in English is impossible in the time allowed. The answer to the first is that superficiality and thoroughness are always relative, and have qualitative rather than quantitative significance. What really matters is not how much or little time is spent in covering a certain area, but how much life and force and meaning the

lecturer can impart to the material that he does have time to present, how much relevance to the student's own interests and activities he can show that material to have, how many and how strong connections he can demonstrate between past and present or past and future.

To the second objection one may answer that nobody can be taught to write (only encouraged to learn), that there is little correlation between knowledge of mechanics and competence in communication, that any successful composition course must start and end with subject matter, and that the great problem of freshman composition is giving students something to write about. Improvement in writing comes mainly from the student's own struggle to express his thoughts, and from the instructor's specific criticisms of the result.

So much for theory. How has the course worked out in practice? It seems to me to have been generally successful. I have not been aware of any decline in the quality of composition as compared with that in the traditional freshman course; and I am confident that students find the subject matter, and the way in which it is presented, far more stimulating and valuable than in the conventional history "survey".

The attitude of the students, as far as can be judged from questionnaires, is in general one of approval, tempered by caustic criticism concerning some details. The lectures are generally considered to be the most successful part of the course. The composition work arouses the least enthusiasm; mainly, I think, because students work hardest on it and have least to show in the way of improved grades. They find it hard to understand that learning to write is a much more complicated and arduous process than memorizing facts or acquiring some mechanical skill. Providing stimulating discussion hours is a problem that we have not yet solved. One evident difficulty is that students feel that they know too little about the subject matter even to ask intelligent questions, to say nothing of offering intelligent opinions.

Of course, success in this experiment (as in every educational undertaking) depends largely on the quality of the teaching. But it is also true that some arrangements offer greater scope for good teaching than do others. I venture to hope that accounts of similar

experiments elsewhere — and even comments and criticism of this particular course, should anyone be moved to make them — may find their way into future issues of *The Critic*.

Ellsworth Barnard
Alfred University
Alfred, New York

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